

the ACTION reporter

American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods

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URBAN RENEWAL "UNMISTAKABLE NATIONAL TIDE"

CITIES CAPITALIZE ON "OUR LIVING FUTURE"

Using the local impetus provided by "Our Living Future," cities that have hosted ACTION's touring show are going into action on a number of fronts.

Three communities, Schenectady, Buffalo and Jamestown, N. Y. are making plans for Home Renewal Information Centers patterned after the Cleveland prototype.

In Troy, N. Y., the original Citizens Committee for ACTION set up to sponsor the showing, is being enlarged and established on a permanent basis, according to James F. O'Crowley, president of Frear's Department Store and chairman of the committee. It will attack major problems of housing improvement and beautification, new home building, attracting heavy industry, and parking, Mr. Crowley revealed.

The \$891 in admissions fees collected by Newark, N. J. is all being used to further neighborhood organization, says Agnes Coleman, chairman of the Newark Commission for Neighborhood Conservation and Rehabilitation, the sponsoring group.

An original project for demonstrating practical housing rejuvenation, announced at the Somerville, Mass. showing of "Our Living Future," is now fully subscribed and ready to go, reports Thomas P. Russell, Chamber of Commerce executive secretary.

The project involves formation of a Massachusetts realty trust which will buy a deteriorated property, remodel it under architectural supervision, within practical limits, and publicize the results.

Sixty more cities across the country are still due to get "Our Living Future." A schedule of the places and dates is available from ACTION.

250 COMMUNITIES NOW HAVE PROGRAMS

Better Coordinated Efforts Needed, Lund Tells Civic Officials and Leaders at Action Clinic

Cambridge, Mass.—There is "an unmistakable national tide" to make our cities better, 200 city officials and civic leaders from 45 Northeastern communities were told at a two-day urban renewal clinic held here by ACTION on November 30 and December 1.

In a keynote speech opening the clinic held on the campus of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Joseph W. Lund, past president of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, and an ACTION Director, called for "faster, better coordinated efforts" of government and private enterprise to further renewal. "No one group, business or political, can do it alone," he said.

Specific aspects of financing and expediting renewal in a community were discussed at ten simultaneous workshop sessions, focus of the New England regional clinic. At these smaller round-tables, experts and resource people from government, business, universities and citizen groups shared their know-how with the participants, who had ample opportunity to discuss local problems with them. Each of the content-full, 90-minute sessions were repeated four times, allowing communities with several people present to cover them all.



Registration for ACTION Urban Renewal Clinic at M.I.T.'s Kravitz Auditorium.

Research Program Committees Set First Meetings

First meetings of the five *ad hoc* committees on ACTION's long-range Research study of "Impediments in the Housing Market" will take place December and January in New York and Washington, D. C.

The committees will review the initial findings in the program's five principal areas — the investor, the producer, the consumer, the government and the community, according to Martin Meyerson, Vice President of Research for ACTION and director of the study.

Ferd Kramer of Chicago is head of ACTION's Research Committee. The *ad hoc* committees are composed of ACTION Board members and other persons who can be most helpful in contributing to the factual studies as well as translating the research findings into action.

The research program on adequate housing has been made possible by a \$250,000 grant from the Ford Foundation.

The City of Cambridge played host to the clinic, in which ACTION also had the cooperation of MIT, Harvard, the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce and Council of Neighborhood Associations.

Andrew Heiskell, Publisher of LIFE, and Chairman of ACTION, addressed the first day's luncheon meeting. Major surgery, "not merely face-lifting," is needed to restore America's cities as organized entities, he told the gathering.

Calling for planned urban growth on an area-wide basis, Mr. Heiskell made a special plea for the businessman to understand how the city's growth affects him. "Today he must understand the relationship between the environment and his own operation."

A highlight of the two days was the presentation at the dinner session of three case histories of successful local citizen action, which were enthusiastically applauded by the audience.

Mrs. Ginger Rosenbly, executive secretary of the Citizens Housing Association for the Dayton Area told how citizens in that Ohio community have

MIDWEST ACTION RENEWAL CLINIC SET!

Dates: March 14-15, 1957

Place: Dayton, Ohio

(Details in January ACTION Reporter)

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ORGANIZATIONS IN RENEWAL

A growing number of national organizations are playing a role in urban renewal. Each month *The Reporter* will carry a statement by one of these groups, describing its particular functions and resources of citizens locally.

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials is a professional organization for persons engaged in community rebuilding — in slum clearance; public housing; large-scale private or cooperative housing; rehabilitation and conservation of existing neighborhoods through housing code enforcement and voluntary citizen action.

NAHRO (pronounced nah-row), as this 23-year old organization is called, operates primarily with public officials at all levels of government—federal, state and local, but its members include citizens agencies organized to do a housing or urban renewal job, and interested individuals.

NAHRO functions as a clearing house of information on housing and urban renewal. It works on the development of legislation that puts public powers and funds behind the urban renewal job. It works to bring qualified people into the field as executives, technicians, and citizen leaders. It assembles information on methods of operating, disseminates this information through either its periodical, specialized publications or its inquiry service, and conducts regional and national conferences.

The Association's monthly *Journal of Housing* reports on problems and progress in redevelopment, slum prevention and public housing. Its bi-monthly *Renewal Information Service*

Newsletter, issued from NAHRO's Washington office, provides information on federal administrative policies.

Information on membership dues, fees for its inquiry service and publications are available on request from NAHRO, 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago 57, Ill.

U.S. CHAMBER SPONSORING NEW FILM

Washington, D. C.—A new motion picture film for use in furthering citizen participation in local renewal programs will be available early in 1957 under sponsorship of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce.

Titled "The Dynamic American City," the film will be in color and run 30 minutes, according to James F. Steiner, manager of the Chamber's Construction and Civic Development Department.

The documentary will discuss the trends and forces which affect our cities and create problems of blight and congestion, and some of the methods for solving them, Mr. Steiner said.

Further information is available from the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Washington 25, D. C.

INSURANCE COMPANIES BACK CODE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS

Atlanta, Ga.—Cooperation of insurance companies with the resolution passed by this city's Board of Aldermen, asking denial of fire coverage to slum properties, is showing results in Atlanta's code enforcement program.

Atlanta was the first city to officially ask insurance companies to require evidence of compliance with codes as well as official orders for improve-

ments before issuing insurance on dwelling units.

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In three other cities around the country insurance companies have also been enlisted in the fight against slum conditions.

A policy rate ten times higher than average is put on substandard buildings by Boston insurers.

Both Chicago and Milwaukee emphasize keeping insurance companies posted on substandard buildings as part of their code enforcement programs.

LET THE PUBLIC KNOW, SAY ROCKFORD CODE OFFICIALS

Rockford, Ill.—Public education before code enforcement is the rule established by this community of 105,000.

To put the rule to work, the City Council provided for a full year's period of informational activities on housing and community improvement before its new Housing Hygiene Code was put into effect. According to Dr. N. O. Gunderson, City Health Commissioner, public reaction to code enforcement, begun last April, proved the waiting period of great value.

The campaign was carried on primarily through simple question-and-answer mimeographed pamphlets, written in layman's language. City officials also talked before any and all interested city and neighborhood groups to explain everyone's part. In a number of neighborhoods, improvement associations were formed to prevent area deterioration, and there has been no extensive concerted opposition, Dr. Gunderson says, since the code went into effect.

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organized to help rid their city of deteriorating neighborhoods.



Joseph Lash

Mayor Richard C. Lee, who ran for office on an urban renewal platform.

The role of business leaders in getting urban renewal off the ground in Cleveland was the subject of the third report by Bayless Manning, professor of law at Yale University, who described the Cleveland Development Foundation.

At the closing session, James E. Lash, executive vice president of ACTION, told the group that bold concepts and techniques in the field of urban renewal can create a "new socio-economic frontier greater in size and even more beneficial than the multi-

million dollar highway program.

"Better living conditions, as well as better roads are essential to the ever-higher economy our way of life demands," Lash declared.



Andrew Holshel

While noting the "phenomenal interest" in urban renewal today, with 250 communities engaged in programs, he said that none has accepted the full challenge of the city's total needs.

Evidence of the constructive effect of the clinic was apparent before the participants had left the luncheon session. The Cambridge group, present in full strength, was seen meeting in one corner, discussing ways of translating the clinic's lessons into action.

According to Leo Molinaro, Education Program Director of ACTION, reports already coming in indicate forward strides in communities which had representatives at the clinic.

Specific evidence of continued interest is the flood of inquiries coming to Agnes Coleman of Newark, expert on the citizen participation sessions.

Another expert, from Hartford, Conn., wrote that "I would be less than honest if I did not admit that I carried a great deal as a result of my participation."



Clinic Reporters: H. Gordon Sweet of New Haven, Bayless Manning of Yale University, Mrs. Ginger Rosenberg of Dayton, and Joseph Lash, ACTION.

The corresponding secretary of the Cambridge Council of Neighborhood Associations, Mrs. Dolores Hinkson, wrote that the clinic afforded her group "a better insight on a subject that is becoming increasingly important to the whole country."